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ABSTRACT

The association between mothers' perceptions of their neighborhoods in terms of crime, physical deterioration, and the availability of important resources and adolescent adjustment in the areas of self-reliance, self-esteem, problem behavior, and psychological distress was studied. Adolescent participants were 37 males and 48 females, all of whom were African-American. Forty-four lived in one-parent homes with their mothers; the others were from two-parent homes. A number of measures were used to measure adolescent characteristics, and both adolescents and their mothers were interviewed. Findings reveal that important features of neighborhoods (crime, physical deterioration, availability of resources) measured through their mothers' reports were associated with adolescent functioning and parent practices. The more that mothers reported that crime was a problem, the lower the adolescents' self-reliance. An outcome of living in a dangerous context may be loss of autonomy. The more mothers reported that the neighborhood was deteriorating, the lower the adolescents' self-esteem and self-reliance, and the higher the mothers' firm control of the adolescent. The more that mothers thought important resources were accessible, the higher adolescent self-reliance and self-esteem. Findings also show positive relations between mothers' acceptance and adolescent adjustment. The effects of mothers' perceptions had effects on adolescent adjustment regardless of mothers' parenting practices. Some limitations of the study are noted. (Contains 3 tables and 36 references.) (SLD)

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The research reported herein was supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) established at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), and in part by CRHDE. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Introduction

An increasing amount of research has examined the role of neighborhood or community factors in the adjustment and social and psychological well-being of African-American adolescents (Brewster, 1994; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Crane, 1991; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; Jarrett, 1995). Theoretical perspectives guiding the present investigation included the community social disorganization framework (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and Sampson's (Sampson & Laub, 1994) integration of social disorganization theory with work on child development and family management. Sampson suggests that structural features of a community, for example, poverty/resource deprivation and/or inadequate health care resources, are linked to youngsters' behavior through their parents. In disadvantaged and socially disorganized communities, parental problems are more likely to arise because of the stressful experiences to which families are exposed (violence, criminal activities). Parents because of the stress to which they are exposed are expected to be less effective at parenting (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1994). Thus, less effective parents are those who are less likely to promote social bonds with their children, and less inclined to control and monitor their behavior. Adolescents reared in such circumstances are expected to display less adequate adjustment. A review of the research supporting the argument that parenting variables mediate the links between neighborhood effects and adolescent adjustment is presented below.

Neighborhoods and Adolescent Adjustment

Research examining links between neighborhood characteristics and aspects of adolescents behavior reflecting their adjustment has shown that the teenage pregnancy and drop rates increased among African-American youngsters as the proportion of high status workers (those holding professional or managerial positions) in the neighborhood declined (Crane, 1991). Similarly, findings have revealed that residence in a "low quality" neighborhood reduced the probability of contraceptive use during first intercourse (Hogan, Astone, & Kitagawa, 1985) and

increased the likelihood of nonmarital pregnancy (Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985). Brewster (1994) found that the neighborhood variables including median family income and the female unemployment and full-time employment rates were significant predictors of nonmarital first intercourse during the adolescent years. Also, community impoverishment (poverty, abandoned housing, population loss, etc.) was associated with juvenile delinquency and teen childbearing (Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995).

In a number of investigations links between neighborhood factors and educational outcomes have been examined. Findings have shown that African-American male's school performance was negatively influenced by the concentration of jobless males in the neighborhood. Also, research has shown that neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) was a significant predictor of self-reported grades for African-American adolescents. Similarly, neighborhood risk (e.g. percentage of low SES neighbors, percentage of jobless) was significantly related to school departure for African-American males (Connell & Halpern-Felsher, 1997).

Neighborhoods and Parenting

Research has revealed significant links between neighborhood factors and parenting behavior. For young children research has shown that neighborhood ethnic diversity was negatively associated with maternal warmth (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, Chase-Lansdale, & Gordon, 1997). Also, parents' perception of the desirability and stability of their neighborhood accounted for a significant amount of the variance in explaining child maltreatment (Garbarino & Crouter, 1978). Mothers in neighborhoods at high risk for child maltreatment rated their neighborhood more negatively as a place to raise children, than mothers in low risk neighborhoods (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). Research has also shown that communities with the highest maltreatment rates were those with conditions including poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, racial segregation, abandoned housing, and population loss (Coulton,

et al., 1995).

Jarrett (1995) reviewed qualitative investigations focusing on African-American families between 1960 - 1994. She found that in order to overcome risks associated with poverty stricken neighborhoods, parents of socially mobile adolescents actively monitored their adolescents behavior and associates and worked to create supportive relationships both within and outside the home. Other findings have shown that the more negatively mothers perceived their neighborhood, (a) the more they talked to their children about the need to find a good job in the future; (b) the more they worried about their child's future employment prospects; and (c) the greater their desire for their child to earn good grades in school (Jayaratne, 1993).

Additionally, a number of researchers have argued that African-American parents may employ parenting practices which appear authoritarian and punitive by middle-class, European-American standards, because of the risks present in the urban neighborhoods in which many African-American families live (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole, 1990; Baumrind, 1991; Ogbu, 1985). Authoritarian parenting allegedly serves to protect youngsters from the dangers present in their neighborhood or community. To date little research has examined this argument. Indeed, it is not known whether parents' perceptions of the danger or safety of their neighborhood leads them to engage in more or less control. Also, it is not known whether, for example, greater control in dangerous neighborhoods is positively associated with adolescents' adjustment.

Mediation of Neighborhood Effects

Sampson and Laub (1994) have argued that structural background factors such as poverty and its correlates effect children and adolescents through their impact on parenting. Sampson and Laub suggest that in the context of poverty parents may be less effective in controlling their children and may be less affectionate and accepting, and in turn, youngsters are at greater risk for adjustment problems as a result. Sampson and Laub found that poverty was associated with less effective monitoring and with the erratic use of harsh/punitive discipline.

Less effective monitoring and erratic harsh/punitive discipline were in turn, associated with adolescents' delinquent behavior. It is important to note that Sampson and Laub's (1994) findings were based upon data taken from a study of white male adolescents (Glueck & Glueck, 1950, 1968), and whether similar findings would be expected for African-American adolescent males remains an open question. Indeed, in other research with African-American adolescents, results revealed that the effects of neighborhood characteristics on educational outcomes were not mediated by parents supportive behaviors (Connell & Halpern-Felsher, 1997).

In other relevant research assessing the possibility that parenting factors mediate the effects of neighborhoods, findings revealed that for preschool children family process variables did not mediate the association of neighborhood factors with children's cognitive scores (Klebanov, et al., 1997). In comparison, for school-age children evidence of mediation was found in that the negative effects of living in ethnically diverse neighborhoods on children's verbal IQ was mediated by the family home learning environment. Also, living in a neighborhood with high SES neighbors was associated with a better home learning environment, which in turn, was associated with fewer internalizing problems for school-age children.

The findings on the role of parenting variables as mediators of the effects of neighborhoods on adolescent adjustment are equivocal. Indeed, the evidence for parental mediation has been found for white adolescents (Sampson & Laub, 1994) and white and African-American younger, school-age (5-6 years) children (Klebanov, et al., 1997). The question of whether parental variables mediate neighborhood effects for African-American adolescents is the focus of the present research. Although some have argued that African-American parents react to the stressors associated with urban life by restricting their children's behavior (Ogbu, 1985), others have argued that sources outside the home (peers, stressful, experiences) may undermine the effectiveness of parents in socializing their youngsters (McLoyd, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1994; Steinberg, Dornsbusch, & Brown, 1992). Unfortunately, empirical research examining the

role of parents in the mediation of neighborhood conditions on African-American adolescents is scarce. Similar to Sampson and Laub (1994) we expected that parenting variables of support and control would mediate the link between mothers' perception of their neighborhood and adjustment for African-American adolescents. In the present study it was presumed that neighborhood factors such as crime, physical deterioration, and access to important resources are potential stressors which are linked to adolescents' behavior through their impact on parents' behavior. Specifically, we expected that mothers' perceptions of their neighborhood in terms of crime, physical deterioration, and availability of important resources would be associated with adolescent adjustment in the areas of self-reliance, self-esteem, problem behavior, and psychological distress. It was also expected that neighborhood perceptions (crime, deterioration, resources) would be associated with mothers' parenting in areas of acceptance and control. Mothers' parenting was expected to be significantly associated with adolescent adjustment. Finally, we predicted that the effects of neighborhood factors on adolescent adjustment would be mediated by mothers' parenting.

Methods

Participants

Adolescent participants were 37 males and 48 females. All of the adolescents and their parents were African-Americans living in a large northeastern city. Forty-four of the adolescents lived in one-parent homes with their mother, while the remaining adolescents lived in two-parent households, either with both biological parents or with their biological parent and a stepparent. Because just 4 fathers completed the measures only the responses of mothers were included in the analyses. Demographic information on the sample is shown in Table 1. The relationship between family structure and the other demographic characteristics was assessed. Two-parent families had significantly higher incomes that one-parent families, $F(1,83) = 3.71$, $p < .01$. Mothers in two-parent families were older, $F(1,83) = 7.28$, $p < .008$, and had completed more years of school than mothers in one-parent homes, $F(1,83) = 3.82$, $p < .05$. Families were recruited through solicitation at recreation centers, local markets, social services agencies, and through newspaper advertisements. All families were paid for their participation. The families were recruited from two areas in the city, one area composed primarily of working-class and poor African-American families, and a second area containing middle-, working-class, and poor residents. Census tract data was used to identify these areas. The aim in selecting these two areas was to insure that families from economically diverse backgrounds would be included in the sample. Analyses done comparing the perceptions of families from these two areas revealed no differences.

Measures

Adolescent variables

(a) *Self-reliance* (10 items) was measured using the Psychological Maturity Inventory (Greenberger, Josselson, Kneer, & Kneer, 1974; Greenberger & Bond, 1976). The measure assessed adolescents' lack of dependency, sense of initiative, and control over events. Sample

questions reverse coded included; "Luck decides most of the things that happen to me," or "When I do something wrong I depend on my parents to straighten things out for me." The adolescents indicated their answers using a Likert-response scale ranging from "4 = Strongly Agree" to "1 = Strongly Disagree."

(b) *Self-esteem* (10 items) was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale measures the self-acceptance component of self-esteem. A sample question includes; "I feel that I have a number of good qualities." The response format for the measure is a Likert-response scale ranging from "4 = Strongly Agree" to "1 = Strongly Disagree."

(c) *Problem behavior* (15 items) was assessed by obtaining the adolescents' self-report of their frequency of involvement in delinquent activities such as physical assault, drug use, vandalism, (Gold & Reimer, 1975). The response format for the measure is a Likert-scale ranging from "4 = several times" to "1 = never."

(d) *Psychological distress* (20 items) was assessed using the Center for Epidemiological Studies (CES) *Depression Scale* (Radloff, 1977). For this measure the adolescents reported the frequency of mental or physical states such as feelings of depression or loss of appetite, etc., over the past month. The Likert-response scale for the measure ranged from "4 = three or more times" to "1 = never."

(e) *Parenting* (30 items) was assessed using the revised short form of the *Child's Report of Parent Behavior Inventory* (CRPBI) (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1977). This inventory measured three aspects of maternal disciplinary practices: Acceptance, Lax Control (vs. Firm Control), and Psychological Control (vs. Psychological Autonomy). The CRPBI is a widely used Likert-scale format, self-report measure of adolescents' assessment of the parent's discipline practices. The *Psychological Control* subscale was not included in the analyses because past research (Taylor, Casten, & Flickinger, 1993) has shown that the measure has little relationship

to adjustment for African-American adolescents.

The *Acceptance* subscale (10 items) assessed perceptions of maternal closeness and acceptance of the adolescent. The *Lax Control* subscale (10 items) consisted of questions on mothers' supervision and regulation of the adolescents' behavior. The measure of Lax Control was coded so that high scores represent the extent to which mothers exerted firm control over the adolescents' behavior.

Maternal variables

(a) *Perceptions of Neighborhood Characteristics* (31 items) was assessed with questions developed by Furstenberg (Furstenberg, 1993). This measure assessed mothers' perceptions of several features of their neighborhood including neighborhood crime, neighborhood deterioration, and neighborhood resources. The questions assessing neighborhood crime (6 items) assessed mothers' perceptions of the extent to which various crimes (e.g., muggings, drug dealing, burglaries, etc.) were a problem in their neighborhood. The Likert-response scale for the measure ranged from "3 = a big problem" to "1 = not a problem." The questions assessing neighborhood deterioration (6 items) assessed mothers' perceptions of the extent to which physical deterioration and neglect were problems in their neighborhood (e.g., abandoned or run down buildings and houses, abandoned cars, illegal dumping, etc.). The Likert-response scale for the measure ranged from "3 = a big problem" to "1 = not a problem." The questions assessing neighborhood resources (19 items) assessed the availability of important services in the neighborhood (e.g., a bank, a supermarket, a library, a police station, etc.). The response categories for the scale was "1 = yes," "0 = no."

(b) *Parenting behavior* was also assessed through mothers' report on their disciplinary practices using the CRPBI. The mothers used the version of the scale designed for parents to report on their parenting practices. A single score for each aspect of parenting assessed was created by averaging the ratings of the mothers and adolescents for each of the parenting

subscales (acceptance and firm control). Justification for this approach comes from Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky (1985), who have shown that the reliability and validity of scores on the subscales of the CRPBI increase as the number of aggregated ratings increases.

All of the measures included have been utilized in research with African-American parents or adolescents and have acceptable levels of reliability. The measures appear to operate similarly across ethnic and social class groups in that the correlates of the measures are similar across groups (e.g., Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Taylor et al., 1993; Roberts & Taylor, 1995). In the present sample the internal reliabilities of all scales were acceptable and highly similar to those reported in previous research using the measures.

Procedures

The parents and adolescents were interviewed separately in the home by interviewers trained in the administration of the measures. The measures took on average approximately 1 1/2 hours to complete.

Analysis Plan

Recursive path analysis estimated by ordinary least squares regression was used to test the conceptual model. For each of the maternal and adolescent variables path coefficients were estimated using a series of multiple regression equations. Across all analyses, the criterion variables were regressed on all variables with arrows leading to the criterion variable. This procedure was followed for each of the separate criterion variables. The demographic factors of age (mother and adolescent), gender (adolescents), income, and family structure were assessed to determine their effects on the major variables.

Baron and Kenney's (1986) recommendations for assessing mediator effects were used in the analyses. According to Baron and Kenney mediational effects are apparent when there is evidence that (a) the predictor variable (e.g., perceptions of neighborhood) is significantly associated with the criterion variable (e.g., adolescent adjustment); (b) the predictor variable and

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proposed mediator (e.g., parenting behavior) are significantly related; (c) the mediator and criterion variable are significantly associated; and (d) controlling for the effects of the mediator variable reduces the association of the predictor and criterion variable, while the association of the mediator and criterion variable remains.

Results

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and reliability scores of the major variables. The intercorrelations among the neighborhood, parenting, and adjustment variables are shown in Table 3. Within the separate sets of measures, correlations were generally low to moderate with some exceptions, suggesting that the individual neighborhood, parenting, and adjustment measures assessed distinctive areas. Also, correlations of the demographic variables including family income, mother's education, family structure, and mother's age with the major variables revealed that in homes with higher incomes mothers were less likely to report that their neighborhood was physically deteriorated, $r(83) = -.38$, $p < .05$. Also, in families with higher incomes mothers were less likely to report firmly controlling their adolescent, $r(83) = -.37$, $p < .01$. Mothers who had completed more schooling were less likely to report that crime was a problem in their neighborhood, $r(83) = -.26$, $p < .05$, and that their neighborhood was physically deteriorated, $r(83) = -.30$, $p < .01$. Mothers who had completed more schooling were also less likely to report that the availability of resources was a problem in their neighborhood, $r(83) = -28$, $p < .05$. Finally, family structure and mothers' age and adolescents' age were unrelated to the major variables. In the results that follow family income and mothers' education were entered in all regression equations to control for their effects.

Mothers' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood and Adolescent Adjustment

The first step in the analyses was to examine the association of mothers' perceptions of the neighborhood with adolescents' self-reliance, self-esteem, problem behavior, and psychological distress. These relations reveal that mothers' perceptions of neighborhood crime

were negatively associated with adolescents' self-reliance (beta =-.23, $p < .05$). Mothers' perceptions of the neighborhoods' physical deterioration were negatively associated with self-reliance (beta = -.30, $p < .01$) and negatively related to self-esteem (beta = -.41, $p < .01$). Mothers' perceptions of the availability of resources in the neighborhood were positively associated with self-reliance (beta = .35 $p < .01$) and with self-esteem (beta = .53, $p < .001$). Mothers' perceptions of resources were also negatively associated with psychological distress (beta = -.36, $p < .01$) and with problem behavior (beta = -.31, $p < .01$).

Mothers' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood and Mothers' Parenting

The second step in assessing the mediation of the association of mothers' perceptions of neighborhood characteristics with adolescent adjustment was to examine the relation of mothers' neighborhood perceptions with mothers' acceptance and firm control of behavior. These analyses reveal that mothers' perceptions of the neighborhoods' physical deterioration were positively linked to firm control (beta = .44, $p < .01$). Also, mothers' perceptions of neighborhood resources were positively associated with acceptance (beta = .29, $p < .01$).

Mothers' Parenting and Adolescent Adjustment

The third step in assessing the mediation of the link between mothers' perceptions of their neighborhood with adolescent adjustment was to examine the association between mothers' acceptance and firm control and adolescents' self-reliance, self-esteem, problem behavior, and psychological distress. Mothers' acceptance was positively associated with self-reliance (beta = .30, $p < .01$) and with self-esteem (beta = .39, $p < .01$). Mothers' acceptance was negatively related to problem behavior (beta = -.30, $p < .01$).

Mediational relations

The final step in assessing the mediation of the association of mothers' perceptions of the neighborhood with adolescent adjustment was to examine the links between mothers' perceptions of the neighborhood with the areas of adolescent adjustment examined, while

controlling the effects of mothers' parenting. These analyses revealed no evidence of mediational effects. The effects of mothers' perceptions of the neighborhood on adolescents adjustment are essentially unchanged when the effects of the parenting variables were controlled.

Discussion

Our findings revealed that important features of neighborhoods (crime, physical deterioration, availability of resources) measured through mothers' report were associated with adolescent functioning and mothers' parenting practices. The more that mothers reported that crime was problem in their neighborhood, the lower adolescents' self-reliance. For adolescents an outcome of living in the context of danger may be less autonomy. In the face of risks adolescents may have reduced opportunities to make personal decisions because their parents offer them fewer freedoms. Also, it is possible that because they understand the dangers of their community, adolescents may be less likely to assert themselves and make autonomy demands.

The results also revealed that the more that mothers reported that their neighborhood was physically declining, the lower adolescents' self-esteem and self-reliance. These findings may indicate that adolescents are more likely to develop negative views of themselves when they live in poor conditions. It may also be that physical deterioration represents another form of danger that has a negative effect on adolescents' autonomy.

The findings also revealed that the more that mothers reported that important resources were accessible in their neighborhood, the higher adolescents' self-reliance and self-esteem, and the lower their problem behavior. This finding may indicate that when important resources are available at acceptable levels adolescents function at a higher level. Adolescents may indeed face less stress when they and their families do not have to strive to obtain important, basic services. These findings are interesting and important because the relationships are present even with the effects of socioeconomic status controlled. Thus, for all families in our sample the availability of resources was associated with adolescent functioning. It is important to note that the accessibility

of resources may indeed be an issue for all urban, African-American families. It may be that as jobs have left inner cities so have many services. Research has shown that racial segregation in American cities has meant the exodus of many institutions providing vital resources to residents (Massey & Denton, 1993). This work has shown that poor Blacks suffer the most from the movement of retail and service institutions from their neighborhoods. However, while it may be easier for working and middle-class African-American families to cope with the need to work to obtain services, our findings suggest that they too are effected by their scarcity. This finding suggests that it is important to consider not just whether families are financially able to afford services, but also how accessible services are. Overall, these findings are in line with previous research suggesting a link between the qualities of a neighborhood and adolescent adjustment (e.g., Brewster, 1994; Crane, 1991; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; Jarrett, 1995). They also extend some past research by showing relations that exist with areas of adjustment beyond teen pregnancy and school drop out, and in results which do not employ census tract data.

Our findings revealed that the more that mothers reported physical deterioration in their community, the higher their firm control of their adolescent. This finding is consistent with findings and arguments suggesting that the risks in urban neighborhoods may lead African-American parents to exert greater control over their children (Baldwin et al., 1990; Baumrind, 1991; Ogbu, 1985). Also, mothers' report of the availability of resources was positively associated with their acceptance of their adolescent. This finding likely indicates that the less stress mothers face in obtaining important resources and services the more accepting they may be in the home. This finding is in line with the evidence suggesting a positive association of stressful experiences with harsh parenting (McLoyd, 1990).

Our findings revealed positive relations between mothers' acceptance and adolescent adjustment. The more accepting mothers were toward their adolescents, the higher adolescents' self-esteem and self-reliance, and the lower their problem behavior. These relations are

consistent with past research (McLoyd, 1990, for a review; Taylor & Roberts, 1995) indicating the importance of mothers' supportive behavior for children's functioning. We found no association between mothers' firm control and any of the areas of adjustment assessed. This findings was not expected and is not consistent with past research. It is possible this finding is a result of differences between the present sample and those in past research. The link between firm control and adolescent adjustment has been shown primarily in research with low income African-American families. The present sample was economically heterogeneous and thus differed from past investigations in which this finding was observed.

Our findings revealed no evidence that the parenting behaviors examined mediated that relations between the neighborhood factors assessed and the areas of adolescent adjustment measured. Thus, mothers' perceptions of neighborhood crime, physical deterioration, and access to resources had effects on adolescents independent of their effects on mothers' parenting practices. In others words, the neighborhood factors examined here are not linked to adolescents' self-esteem, self-reliance, or problem behavior because of their effects on mothers' acceptance or firm control. It is possible that other parenting variables such as for example, parents' efforts at creating a structured and organized family environment, serve as mediators of the effects of neighborhoods on adolescents. It is also possible that a more complex set of mediational processes link neighborhoods to adolescent functioning. For instance, it may be that neighborhood characteristics are linked to mothers' psychological adjustment and functioning, which in turn, is linked to mothers' parenting behavior. Mothers' behavior then may be linked to adolescent adjustment.

There are several limitations or findings in the investigation which should be noted. First, the neighborhood measures were based upon mothers' perceptions. Using other reporters might yield different findings than those obtained. Also, the use of questionnaires as the sole means of data collection introduces another possible limitation. It is possible that significant

associations revealed were the result of shared method variance involved in the use of a single method of data collection. A multiple method and multiple informant strategy would help overcome this problem. Thus, the relations observed must be interpreted with caution.

Second, the causal direction among the variables is uncertain. For example, the significant relation between mothers' perception of neighborhood physical deterioration and their firm control may mean that when mothers perceive their neighborhood as declining, they act to control youngsters' behavior as a form of protection. It is also possible however, that mothers who firmly control their adolescents' behavior are more prone to perceive changes in the neighborhood as signs of decline. Longitudinal data are needed to assess the causal direction of the relations among the variables.

Finally, the sample was composed of urban, African-American mothers and adolescents. The results may not generalize to African-American families living in rural or suburban settings, families of other ethnic/racial backgrounds or younger children.

In terms of the directions of future research, more work is needed on the processes linking neighborhood characteristics to adolescent adjustment. Variables in the area of peer relations may also serve to link neighborhood characteristics and adolescent behavior. It is also important to explore the role of fathers or father figures and their parenting as possible mediators of the effects of neighborhoods on adolescent adjustment. Indeed, research by Ray (1996) has shown that a task that economically disadvantaged African-American fathers perform is helping children recognize and negotiate the dangers of their environment. In the present study far too few fathers completed measures to conduct meaningful analyses. Fathers in general, but especially African-American fathers are underrepresented in research on families.

Given the harsh and risky neighborhoods which many African-American adolescents and their families inhabit, it is important to understand the processes linking neighborhoods to youngsters' functioning. An understanding of the underlying processes may permit intervention

targeted at the areas with the most promise to promote the functioning of adolescents and their families.

Table 1

Family Structure

Characteristic	Single-Parent (n=44)	Two-Parent (n = 41)
Mean age adolescent (SD)	15.05 (1.80)	15.09 (1.54)
Mean age mother (SD)	38.19 (5.48)	44.33 (7.20)
Mean years of schooling mother (SD)	12.10 (2.59)	13.01 (1.72)
Mean number household members (SD)	3.83 (1.22)	4.39 (1.43)
Mean household income (SD)*	3.40 (1.69)	4.42 (2.46)

*Income level: 1 = less than $5,000/year; 2 = $5,000 - $10,000/year; 3 = $10,000 - $15,000/year; 4 = $15,000 - $20,000/year; 5 = $20,000 - $25,000/year; 6 = $25,000 - $30,000/year; 7 = $30,000 - $35,000/year.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas of the Major Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha
Neighborhood Crime	13.00	2.98	.83
Neighborhood Deterioration	11.17	3.04	.77
Neighborhood Resources	22.39	8.54	.95
Acceptance	51.32	4.47	.82
Firm Behavioral Control	20.81	3.07	.77
Adolescent Self-Esteem	24.43	3.12	.93
Adolescent Self-Reliance	12.73	4.66	.88
Adolescent Problem Behavior	19.41	7.92	.93
Adolescent Psychological Distress	12.65	4.63	.82

The alpha's reported in the table are from the sample in the present study.

Table 3

Correlations Among Major Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Neighborhood Crime	---								
2. Neighborhood Deterioration	82**	---							
3. Neighborhood Resources	21*	18	---						
4. Acceptance	01	01	37**	---					
5. Firm Behavioral Control	23*	43**	09	03	---				
6. Adolescent Self-Reliance	-20*	-38**	80**	41**	01	---			
7. Adolescent Self-Esteem	-15	-45**	47**	49**	-10	40**	---		
8. Adolescent Problem Behavior	11	16	-78**	-41**	02	80**	41**	---	
9. Adolescent Psychological Distress	16	16	-69**	-20*	05	80**	-29**	64**	---

Decimal points for the correlations are omitted.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

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The Laboratory for Student Success

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) is one of ten regional educational laboratories in the nation funded by the U.S. Department of Education to revitalize and reform educational practice in the service of children and youth.

The mission of the Laboratory for Student Success is to strengthen the capacity of the mid-Atlantic region to enact and sustain lasting systemic educational reform through collaborative programs of applied research and development and services to the field. In particular, the LSS facilitates the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process both regionally and nationally. To ensure a high degree of effectiveness, the work of the LSS is continuously refined based on feedback from the field on what is working and what is needed in improving educational practice.

The ultimate goal of the LSS is the formation of a connected system of schools, parents, community agencies, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education that serves the needs of all students and is linked with a high-tech national system for information exchange. In particular, the aim is to bring researchers and research-based knowledge into synergistic coordination with other efforts for educational improvement led by field-based professionals.

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